

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

As a preliminary matter, it is noted that Applicants have not received an endorsed copy of Form PTO-1449 from the Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement dated November 10, 2003. It is respectfully requested that the same be furnished with the next official communication.

The continued allowance of Claims 2, 6, 8, 12, and 18 is acknowledged with appreciation.

Claim 14, 20, and 21 stand newly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Initially, it is noted that the stated ground of rejection is based solely on Sadakata '026. However, it is apparent from the asserted rationale that the rejection is actually based on Sadakata '026 in view of Schremmer '111 or Aota '867. As will be explained in the following remarks, the rejection is untenable and it should be withdrawn.

Claim 14 recites, inter alia, that the radially outermost points of contact of the stopper portions on the hollow shaft member with the stopper faces on the joint member are disposed inwardly from respective centers of the stopper faces in a radial direction. Claim 20 recites that only portions of radially inward halves of the faces of the stopper portions on the joint member are brought into contact with the faces of the stopper portions on the hollow shaft member in accordance with the relative rotation between the joint member and the shaft member. The

rejection acknowledges that Sadakata fails to disclose the aforementioned features of Applicants' invention, but asserts that it would have been obvious to modify Sadakata to include such features in view of Schremmer or Aota, "since a change in the size of a prior art device is a design consideration within the skill of the art." Office Action, page 3.

The relevance of Schremmer and Aota aside, Applicants would note initially that the aforementioned features of Claims 14 and 20 do not represent a mere "change in the size of a prior art device," as asserted by the Office. Rather, they represent a change in a structural interrelationship of components with a concomitant reduction in stress on the base end of the shaft member stopper portions. The Office's characterization of the invention as a mere change in the size of a prior art device is therefore hardly appropriate.

As to Schremmer and Aota, there is nothing in either reference that, without the benefit of hindsight in view of Applicants' present teachings, would have suggest modifying Sadakata to include the aforementioned features of Claim 14 and 20. Schremmer's device includes no structure analogous to the stoppers 10a, etc. in Sadakata. Schremmer merely teaches a splined plug-in connection of a vehicle steering spindle. Nor has the Office identified where, in Schremmer, the allegedly relevant teachings are found. Clearly, Schremmer's spline connection would not have provided the skilled practitioner with any motivation to modify

Sadakata's stopper structure in accordance with Applicants' present invention.

Aota, in contrast to Schremmer, does include stopper structure corresponding to that of Sadakata. See stoppers 4a in Figs. 1 and 4. However, like Sadakata, Aota's stoppers 4a extend radially beyond the center of the contact surfaces on the joint member 1. This is clearly seen in Fig. 4. Consequently, contrary to the Office's contention, Aota would not have suggested modifying Sadakata's stoppers in accordance with the aforementioned features of Claims 14 and 20.

As demonstrated by the foregoing remarks, the outstanding rejection of Claims 14, 20, and 21 is untenable. Applicants therefore respectfully urge that the rejection be withdrawn and that those claims now be allowed.

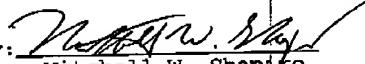
New dependent Claims 24-33 have been added in order to provide more comprehensive protection for certain aspects of Applicants' invention. As will be evident, these claims are directed toward the curved configurations of the radially inner and outer surfaces of the root portions of the shaft stopper member. See, for example, Fig. 5, (left-hand side). As will be evident, the newly presented claims distinguish even further from Sadakata, with or without Schremmer and Aota.

A Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit

any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been requested separately, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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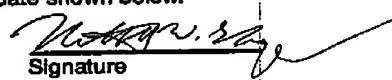
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